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Pulpit Preaching

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TWO PASTORAL PRAYERS

Lowell M. Atkinson
First Methodist Church
Englewood, New Jersey

Almighty and everliving God, we are gathered here to ask, to seek, and to receive Thy blessing. We turn to Thee knowing that our true confidence is in Thee and not in ourselves. We turn to Thee with hopeful hearts because of the wonder of Thy character and the wonder of Thy dealings with men and the wonder of Thy revelation of Thyself to us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. We would not only ask for Thy blessing, we would ask that we may recognize Thy blessings when they are given. Wilt Thou teach us to find those divine surprises in life's difficulties which enable us to mature and grow. Wilt Thou teach us to seek out in every thorny difficult situation that golden heart of meaning Thou hast placed there. Wilt Thou make of us spiritual adventurers always on the quest for something shining and beautiful and true that comes from Thy life into our life. Especially we would ask for that blessing of fellowship with Thee when we speak to Thee in prayer, when our hearts are strengthened with faith, when our spirit feels the deep satisfaction that abides because of deeds well done in Thy name. For the wonder of the life that we can live in fellowship with Thee in faith and trust and loyal service we would praise Thy name.

We ask that Thou wouldst bless our worship that it may be earnest and honest, that our hearts in all

(Continued on page 11)

WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey

The happy people are those who are producing something; the bored people are those who are consuming much and producing nothing.

W. R. Inge

* * *

Delinquency is a measure of adult neglect of children for children were all right when we got them.

Kentucky School Journal

* * *

Reverence for life is more than solicitude or sensitivity for life. It is a sense of the whole, a capacity for wonder, respect for the intricate universe of individual life. It is the supreme awareness of awareness itself. It is pride in being.

Norman Cousins

* * *

If I were asked to name the world's greatest need, I should unhesitatingly say wise mothers; and the second greatest, exemplary fathers.

David O. McKay

* * *

Many accept the Christ of the cross but reject the cross of the Christ.

* * *

Go ahead and do it. It's easier to succeed than to explain why you didn't.

(Continued on page 12)

The first theme in next month's issue will be "Reformation Renewal"; the second theme, "Let's Turn to the Bible!"

Pulpit Preaching

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JOHN M. JENSEN
HOMER J. R. ELFORD
EARL CRANSTON
ROGER HAZELTON

TABLE TALK

John M. Jensen, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California

It was midmorning on the 14th day of Nisan in the year 3790, or by the Roman calendar 784, or, if you try to compute it by our time, the 6th of April, 30 A.D. Two men walked tentatively into Jerusalem, through the Fountain Gate in the southeast wall, headed northwesterly through the city. Presently they located their man carrying a water pitcher. He was not hard to identify. Men generally do not carry the water there. After following this man these two arranged for and prepared a room for an event that holds the Christian world together this morning in one cherished and meaningful convocation.

The event all Christendom knows as the Lord's Supper. On this day, World Communion Sunday, Christians in all lands of the earth join in a rite, which though bearing prolific symbolism, opens to them crystal clear windows of living meaning.

It began when a three-year ministry drew to a close, and men's hearts were still half-committed, uncertain, and troubled. The problem Jesus faced was one of making meaning clear. Jesus had one last statement to make that would sum up all that he had taught and done. And the statement was a fulfillment of the purpose of his appearance, in the first place, as described by John in his prologue, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us."

I

He had announced to the world some startling truths. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. . . . As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.'" Remember, Jesus knew that there were rumblings among the disciples because of this statement. So, he said "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." It was after this that many of the disciples discontinued their attachment to him. He asked Peter, "Will you also go away?" Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Nothing could give meaning to such words as these quite like a meal served in the fellowship and atmosphere of trust and warm affection. So, Jesus gave an explanation we could not miss when he sat at the table with his disciples.

The supper table of the Christian home is the center around which a great living reality is experienced. The menu is lovingly planned for the nourishment of growing bodies, and the conversation becomes a stimulus for expanding and hungry minds. The fellowship is the strongest of all influences by which the children take on the character of the parents. Here is the communion by which convictions and standards of behavior are built into the learners.

A great strength of the Communion service is that it has had the power to speak in every man's language of a truth that was designed for every man's heart. Wherever the Church of Christ obeys his words to "do this in remembrance of me," there is a family of faithful ones who have discovered meaning they could understand. As the Church of Christ has spread

throughout the world it has done so as those who have proclaimed its message have found ways to translate the table talk of this memorable event into the vernacular of the people. This candor and integrity follow hard on the heels of one of the first occurences at the table. When the argument arose over who of the disciples was the greatest, Jesus dealt their selfishness a blow by taking a basin and towel and washing their feet. The disciples never again could forget that in the question of authority they had seen their Master humbly ministering to them as a servant and saying, "He who would be master must be servant of all."

The Valiente Indians of Panama sit with us today at the Lord's Table and share with us the understanding of what it means to be servants to Jesus who has so perfectly served us. The great truth of fellowship with Christ has been born to them because the Scriptures have been translated into their own language. For them one of authority is "the man on the handle." By this they mean that the ruler is the man who has the handle of the hunting knife in his hand. They say, "He is on the handle." But what a graphic picture of the act of redemption is spoken to them in their own language when Jesus turned the blade toward himself and made himself their servant!

The problem of the translator is one of identification. Just as Jesus translated eternal truth into our language by becoming that truth and identifying himself with us, so the eternal truth of God's redemption in Christ has found a way of reaching the minds and hearts of people of every land and language.

II

At the table Jesus also had some words to speak concerning faith. Speaking to Simon, as to all of them, he said, "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." Faith is not easily described to people of primitive languages. But Christians are sitting with us at the table in the forest of the Ubangi-Shari district of French Equatorial Africa. They speak of faith as "hearing and taking into the soul." A neighboring tribe would say, "To hear within oneself and not let go."

Having washed the disciple's feet, Jesus took the cup and gave it to them saying, Drink this, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Men everywhere have known of sin. They have known what it is to violate some good and perfect law.

When the Navaho Indians take the cup this morning, their scripture will speak of "that which is off to the side." A people so accustomed to travel in rugged mountains understand the serious confinement of a narrow trail. They are realizing that they have done what is not in line with the straight truth, and the forgiving act of Christ brings them back from the course that would have led them to their death.

The subject of forgiveness is deep in the heart of this Last Supper. Jesus said, Drink this for the forgiveness of your sins. This morning in Nigeria the Communion service offers an explanation regarding the beginning of a new life. In God's forgiveness He refuses to remember our past. Therefore, they say: 'He turns His back on it. He only looks ahead."

Forgiveness is not obvious to many primitive peoples. It is quite often their disposition to take an accounting of offenses even to the extent of the offender's life. But the forgiveness of God has brought great changes for Tzeltals who have learned to say, "God loses our sin in His own heart." The large heart of Jesus was displayed in his act of foot-washing, and for these primitive peoples they have learned also that God's heart is large enough and all embracing enough for our sins to be entirely lost and remembered no more.

III

One of the most memorable of all statements that Jesus made at the table was one in which he said: "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." We have accepted the possibility that belief was purely a matter of the intellect. But some of our fellows at the table this morning, products of more primitive cultures, have gone beyond us in understanding the implications of this belief. Among the Cuicatecs there is no way of distinguishing between belief and obedience. These people have found a way of expressing the full implication of the belief to which Jesus referred, for they have said, "If you believe, why do you not obey?" They would further say, "If you obey, does this not show that you believe?" Here is a lesson that World Communion Sunday brings home to us. For we who have given the assent of the minds are lagging in our response of the will.

We are witness today to the truth of Isaac Watts' hymn:

> People and realms of every tongue
> Dwell on His love with sweetest song.

For Jesus does "reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run." The truth of God in Christ has come to men everywhere in their common language, meeting them in their most common experiences.

Two missionaries were one day conducting their family devotions in a Tarascan home, and as their habit was they were praying in English. "What are you doing?" asked the native. "We are praying," they explained. "Oh, then you are reciting," said the native to whom the English sounded like the Latin liturgies in the far-off cathedral. "No," said the missionary, "we are praying." Then to make it clearer he said, "You see, we are just talking to God." "Indeed," exclaimed the native, "please talk to God in my language so that I may listen in."

The truth of God in Christ, which has come to men everywhere, meeting them in such common daily occurences, is found around a table of intimate fellowship. And in it "each man hears in his own language . . . the mighty works of God."

ARE YOU ONE OF US?

Homer J. R. Elford, Trinity Methodist Church, Youngstown, Ohio

When Christianity was in its infancy travelers found their way to the homes of fellow Christians by means of small drawings which were etched in the sand or over doorways. It was the sign of the fish which informed the traveler that a Christian lived in that dwelling. As men met in the market places they would slyly draw this sign in the sand with their staffs or fingers, gently nudge their neighbor, cast an inquiring eye toward the ground, and look for some acknowledgment. The one approached, were he a Christian, would ask, "Are you one of us?" When the reply came, "I am," the traveler would be taken to some secret place where there was less danger of being seized by those who were determined to stamp out all influences of Christ. The sign of the fish came into being because the first letters of the Greek words in the phrase, "Jesus Christ, son of God, Saviour," make the Greek word meaning "fish." Therefore, to give this sign was to present the password which opened the door to companionship with that brave company of loyal followers of Jesus who were determined to establish a living fellowship which would perpetuate the Way, the Truth and the Life which Jesus had begun.

These people believed that Jesus was the "Anointed One"; that in Him "the Word had been made flesh"; that they had seen in Him "the light

of the knowledge of the glory of God." Fellowship in this group was, in effect, fellowship with Christ. That is precisely what fellowship in the Church is today. And to those who would enter into this endless line of splendor which seeks to make Christ real in the life of our time, we continue to ask, "Are you one of us?" There are some definite characteristics of spirit which will reveal whether or not we qualify for this relationship.

I

For one thing, like those early followers of the Way, we must be willing to have a concern for others which finds us assuming some of the burdens Christ would bear. There is a small community in a mid-western state which boasts of two very fine colleges. It is also a thriving agricultural center. On a billboard outside the city limits you will see this sign: "You are entering the city of cows, colleges, and contentment." It is undoubtedly a euphonious description of that city's reason for existence, but we would warn those folk, and ourselves, that there is a grave danger in advertising one's contentment. Una W. Harsen expressed it well in the lines titled "Content Is Not Enough":

> Content is not enough.
> I, who know beauty and an ordered life,
> Should never be at peace
> While thousands do not know this thing called joy—
> Gray, loveless lives, lived out in numbing fear.

Albert Schweitzer caught this insight and expressed it in his autobiography:

"It became steadily clearer to me that I had not the inward right to take as a matter of course my happy youth, my good health, and my power to work. Out of the depths of my feeling of happiness there grew up gradually within me an understanding of the insight of Jesus that we must not treat our lives as being for ourselves alone. We must carry our share of the misery which lies upon the world."

There is stated in crystal clear terms the challenge which is laid at the feet of those who would claim to be "one of us." To confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord demands that we take onto our shoulders some of His burden of world redemption, and that may require that we make the same quality of sacrifice, even unto death, which He made.

II

Or again, being one of the company of Christ's followers requires that we have some of His quality of compassionate care for people. I once heard Bishop Edgar A. Love tell of taking a party of visitors through a prison. A lady member of the party stopped before an inmate's door and said to the man, "Hello, Brother!" The man looked up from his reading and said, "I don't believe I know you, lady." "No," she said, "I doubt if we have ever met and we do not know one another's names, but you are my brother—my brother in Christ." Coming over to the barred door, the man asked, "Do you really mean that, lady?" She replied: "Yes, I do. You know, we are all members of one great family; we all have one Father." With tears in his eyes, the man said: "Lady, if someone had told me that thirty years ago I wouldn't be here today, but would be on the outside with my wife and children. No one ever told me that he cared." While the hungers for food are sending half the world's people to their beds tonight hungry, there is greater hunger which is even more universal—the hunger to know that somebody cares. Because they lack the sense of being cared for, people experience all sorts of mental, physical, and moral breakdowns. We know what the late Edgar A. Guest was driving at when he wrote:

Somebody cares for you,
Cares so much that the heart
grows glad
At your slightest touch;
And the sound of your voice,
Or the sight of your smile
Makes every burden and
care worthwhile.

When we really care about other people, we show our true membership in this fraternity of which Christ is the head. Then we can say, "Yes, I am one of them."

III

And then one thing more. If we are to be able to qualify for membership in this very select group, we must admit to the universal, all-inclusive nature of this fellowship. It takes high intellectual quality to qualify for membership in some groups; it is demanded that our ancestors fought in certain wars to be members of some bodies; it is necessary that we have one particular nationality or racial background to be eligible for all the rights and benefits of some organizations, but here is a fellowship which has for its requirements only that we believe that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord.

The key word is "whosoever." Here is a place for people of every race and nation; people of every talent and degree of training. It matters not who our ancestors were, what they did, or what they failed to do. Moreover, it makes no difference what we have done. In fact, paradoxical as it may seem, there is greater joy in the heart of God over one sinner that repents and turns toward this Saviour, than there is over those who need no repentance.

Are you one of us? If you aren't, then it is your own choice, for there is nothing about your past or your present which need keep you from entering into this company of followers of Jesus who are looking to Him for life that is worthy of life everlasting. All you need is the willingness in your heart to share with Him the burden of the world's redemption; to take to your heart some of His great concerns and cares; and let Him lead you from darkness to light, from death to life. Why don't you let Him know that you want to help Him. Then you can say "Yes" when one of his followers asks "Are you one of us?"

CONTINUING COMMUNION

Earl Cranston, Southern California School of Theology, Claremont, California

The Communion service is the chief symbol of Christian community observed in countless places and languages on any day. There is no climate to which it is unfamiliar; on it the sun never sets. It must have both power and reality to have won this position in human hearts and lives.

This is a great change from the humble beginning in an upstairs room in Jerusalem where thirteen men observed a religious feast which was a regular Passover meal and then a special ceremony. The Master broke bread and said that others should do this in remembrance of him. They sang a hymn and went out to the garden, and he, soon thereafter, to the cross.

Slowly, yet increasingly, his followers came to repeat and treasure this observance. At first it was a simple, meaningful meal. Initiated on the walk to Emmaus and in a wayside inn on Easter afternoon, his presence was recognized in the breaking of the bread. Before long Peter and other disciples in an early morning glimpsed him again as they ate together by the Sea of Galilee, and their spokesman received the charge, "Feed my sheep." Many years passed, and an exile on the island of Patmos, in the brightness of a sunrise, received a message from

the risen Jesus: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to eat with him and he with me."

These may have been actual words used by the Master long before, when after a journey, a discussion, or a challenge he stood outside the familiar home of Mary and Martha in Bethany or that of James and John. A recently discovered copy of a second century Coptic document, entitled "The Gospel of Thomas," represents the mother of the two brothers saying to Jesus: "Who art thou, man? And whose son? Thou didst take thy place at my bench and didst eat at my table." Jesus is said to have replied, "I am he who is from (the one who is always) the same. I have been given the things of my Father." Not sensing his meaning, she was soon to envisage him not as sitting between her sons on the kitchen bench, but enthroned in a material kingdom with her sons on either side. That never came to be, but with the years the early church grew to think of him at regular community meals and at special services as well. Paul writes of such to the Corinthians. And decades later the scholar Pliny the Younger reports to Emperor Trajan that the Christians in Asia Minor met early in the morning, recited a hymn, swore to follow moral lives, and soon reassembled to share food, apparently a communion service or meal. The anonymous "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," of about the same period, records a standard communion prayer then in general use: "We thank thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge made known through thy servant Jesus. As this broken bread (in seed) was scattered upon the hills and gathered together and made one, so let thy church be gathered together into thy kingdom from the ends of the earth."

So it has come about that at all times in countless places men and women kneel or bow to take this sacrament, whether in the pomp of Catholicism or the simpler ways of Protestantism. In either case this communion involves inner confession and repentance, from a heart of peace and charity and a will determined to do better.

In the present critical era when all religion is on trial, believers everywhere may look forward with the late Archbishop Temple to the time when all Christians may observe this service at a common table. Meanwhile, whether in a quiet or crowded room, or on a trip to a village or a ride on a highway, with a stop in a grove or an inn, hearts may burn as they sense the living presence of the One who walks the road or stands at the door and knocks, who will be known to them in the breaking of the bread.

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

Roger Hazelton, Pomona College, Claremont, California

How many sermons have been preached on the Good Samaritan, do you suppose, in the last nineteen hundred years? And where have they all gotten us, I wonder? Of course, the old charm still clings to the parable, almost a fairy-tale kind of magic: the wild, desolate place in the road, the wicked robbers, the poor helpless victim, a smug priest, a fastidious Levite, and the appealing, kindly Samaritan himself. Yes, it is a highly satisfying story; it reads well in church; it even gives us a kind of gratification.

But, of course, that is not the point of the story at all. Jesus didn't mean to comfort the lawyer whose question started the thing off; he wanted to disturb him, and he wants to disturb us. His story does not merely teach a lesson, but it focuses a demand and names a duty. We cannot really read the parables without saying to our-

selves, "It is I that Jesus means; it is about me that he is speaking."

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But wait a minute; how can I love my neighbor if I don't know who my neighbor is? So I, lawyer-like, put a question to Jesus, a real poser: "Who is my neighbor?"

And Jesus doesn't give me the answer I want. He tells a story instead. "Now by coincidence a priest was going down that road and when he saw him he passed by on the other side." It won't do at all to talk back and say, "But, of course, I am not a priest, though I think that the Gospel has quite properly made the priest a character in this story, as priests are a generally bad lot." No, the priest is you, who can see someone in pain and distress and pass by unmoved.

"So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." You are the Levite, and I have been the Levite many a time. Perhaps you are a practical man and don't want to get mixed up in such a mess; you might get your picture in the paper or have to testify in court; why not write a letter to the chief of police asking better protection along this lonely road? Or maybe you have important and pressing business on ahead; if you stop now the day will be ruined; you must remember to turn in an alarm when you get to the next town. You are that Levite, and so am I.

"But a Samaritan, as he journeyed came to where he was, and when he saw him he had compassion." Now, just in order to vary things a bit, you can say at this point, "No, this is not I; I am not like that." And when the parable comes to an end and Jesus says to the lawyer, "Go and do the same," you must say again, "It is addressed to me, this story; off then at once."

I

After we have seen ourselves in the mirror of the parable we are ready to ask another, a more Christian question, "Whose neighbor shall I be?" The good Samaritan did not bother about wondering who his neighbor was; he proved himself a neighbor. He knew his neighbor when he saw him, though he came from a strange and despised people. The Levite and the priest—that is, you and I—saw him but did not recognize him as our neighbor, and passed callously and busily by.

Now it is perfectly clear who our neighbor is, whose neighbor we ought to be. My neighbor is any one who is in need, anyone whom I can help. But this is not the end of the story, and it is not the end of this sermon. Granted that I as a Christian know who my neighbor is and that I owe him the love which I received from God, how shall I love him? Just what does this mean practically for the members of a broken home, or for the man who has just lost his job because of the color of his skin, or for the business man whose employees have gone out on strike?

Let us clear the decks by admitting that there are some things which loving your neighbor does not mean. It does not mean liking him. How could it possibly mean that? Most of the human family we do not know and never will. There are times when we can almost understand the rather bitter remark: "God gave us our relatives; thank God we can choose our friends." Loving people you don't like is hard; but it is Christian business. Thomas à Kempis sat down in his monk's cell six centuries ago and wrote some words which still ring out with truth: "It is not great matter to associate with the good and gentle, for his is pleasing to all, and everybody gladly has peace and likes those who agree with him. But to be able to live peacefully with the hard and perverse, with the disorderly, or with such as oppose us, that is, a great grace, and a most praiseworthy manly thing."

And again, loving your neighbor does not mean simply wearing an amiable and kindly expression toward

him. Love is gentle and kind, but love is resolute and determined, too. There are places in life where tender-heartedness is not enough. A lot of heartbreaks are caused by someone's yielding to the temptation to be nice at the wrong time; in the home, in the classroom, in the office, in the government. Some of the strongest fighters for the Kingdom of God are rough and crude, but they speak plainly and do what has to be done.

II

What does loving your neighbor mean, then? In the first place, it means making an honest effort to see him as he is. I can only love my neighbor if I know something of his problems, his faults, his deepest hopes, his secret possibilities, for these are all part of the truth about him. Love means that we should ask a question not about our neighbor but about ourselves: "How would I act if I were he? What would I want from life if I were a plantation Negro in Texas, a tubercular coolie in China, an up-and-coming farmer in the Ukraine? How would I behave if I were a young, half-starved orphan in the Congo? Well, then, make a real effort to understand them, for they are all your neighbors and mine this day.

In the second place love means taking part in the struggle for justice. If I want to get a sense of reality into my effort to live the Christian life, I must ask another question of myself: 'Where around me now are the walls that separate me from my neighbor?" And when we answer honestly we know that these are walls of injustice which not only hold us apart, but occasionally set us at each other's throats. Fences of prejudice, of segregation, and of discrimination do not just grow; they are built and maintained, and it is we who build and keep them. But if we make them, so can we break them; and we had better do it soon, before they break us.

If I talk of love where I am unwilling to seek justice, I am fooling myself. Let me then begin in a humble way to help break down the walls that separate me from my neighbor and keep me from seeing him as he is. Love is not blind, but love is color-blind, class-blind, country-blind, so far as country, class, and color stand in the way of that free and equal comradeship to which Christ has called each of us.

III

And in the third place, love means that we should allow ourselves to be made over by God as the good of all requires. You cannot love and remain what you are. If I really care for my neighbor I make his good my own, and this means that I must allow some of my habits, interests, and purposes to be broken to pieces for the sake of God's own Kingdom. I have to break out of the shell of my self-centeredness and lie open to my fellow men and to God; no one can say where the way of love may take me. For the will to love as we are loved is fraught with risk and pain and cost; it points constantly to the fact that life is found only on the other side of losing it. Once a neurotic woman came to a psychiatrist, told her story, and received an interesting prescription: "One hour of loving each day." There is nothing grandiose about loving; it is humble business; but if you know that your life is lent to be spent, and spend it in the daily doing of what needs to be done, then you can say with Robert Southwell, "Not where I breathe but where I love, I live."

What delicate and difficult business it is to love your neighbor! Take just the one matter of forgiveness; can you swallow your pride and put out the hand of friendship to someone who has just made himself your enemy, and if it is refused, give him your hand again? If you cannot, you still have a long way to go before you can become a Christian. And if it is hard to forgive your personal enemy, how much harder to forgive strange and far-off peoples whom we happen to suspect or fear!

Difficult, yes; but possible too. There is a great deep mystery in loving your neighbor. You are called upon to love him as you love yourself, and it is only when you love him that you love yourself as you ought. But whence comes this strange power to love, thrusting up through the crust of self-encirclement? It is a gift, not an achievement. You cannot make love happen in yourself; you can only look at the place where love makes itself known, and put yourself at love's disposal. For love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God, for God Himself is love. He who gives the command also gives the power.

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sincerity may lift their real needs to Thee. Grant that beyond the conventional phrases and the well-worn words there may be the simple outreach of the honest heart.

We would pray for those who are separated from us. Grant that we may all be united together in spirit in our common faith and purpose through these summer months. Wilt Thou hear our prayer of intercession for all who are sick or in distress, in sorrow or perplexity. May we mutually help and sustain one another by our outgoing thoughts and prayers and teach us mercifully to look upon one another with eyes of understanding and affection in the spirit of Christ. We ask that Thy spirit may touch every nation and every people in this turbulent world and give to us the peace that we cannot create of ourselves, the peace which passes our understanding but which is possible because of the wonders of Thy character.

Wilt Thou bless us in all that we purpose and say and do, that we may serve in the army of the Lord as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, count it our greatest happiness to march beneath His banner, and trust in His sure guidance who is our eternal leader, our Redeemer, our Saviour and our Friend. For these mercies we ask in His holy name. Amen.

* * *

Lord God, our Heavenly Father, Thou whose love is all about us and whose Providence is above us and Thou whose everlasting arms are beneath us to give our life confidence and confidence always, we come to Thee with trust because of the wonders of Thy character. We rejoice in this privilege of worshiping Thee and finding refreshment for our spirits as we come into conscious fellowship with Thy Holy Spirit. Wilt Thou speak unto our hearts that which we need to hear from Thee. Wilt Thou meet us at the point of our greatest hope and strengthen us in every high and holy resolve. Wilt Thou meet us at the point of our deepest despair and there give us the help of Thy redeeming hand lifting us out of the slough of despondency and setting our feet again upon our pilgrim way. Wilt Thou be our companion in the times of confusion that our minds may receive the light of Thy truth. Wilt Thou be with us in the time of vacillation and uncertainty that we may be able to make the right choices and the true decisions in the light of Thy eternal standards, and so live faithfully and walk worthily in the ways of Thy holy kingdom.

We pray for all who have particular needs, for all who are away, for all who are in distress or trouble, for all who need the touch of Thy hand upon theirs. We pray for all who honor Thee, in all the lands of this earth. Grant that Thy spirit may ever give courage and strength to all who stand for Thy truth everywhere. Wilt Thou enlarge our horizons and give us wider vision that we may want our love to reach about this earth. Grant that we may reach out helpful hands of service to the places of this world's need.

We thank Thee for the wonder of

our fellowship together in the name of Jesus Christ. We rejoice in the privileges that are ours. We ask that Thou would chasten us with an humble spirit. Grant that our fellowship in this church may be deep and steadfast and strong, that it may ever be a growing and dynamic fellowship of faith and worship and service, that through us Thy kingdom may receive fresh strength.

Bless our prayer. Bless our worship together and bless our lives in the days before us with Thy holy presence. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

WORTH QUOTING

from page 2

The man who is fired with enthusiasm for his job is seldom fired.

* * *

Why do families use money they haven't earned to buy things they don't need to impress people they don't like.

* * *

Discover your weak points and then build a fortification at each.

* * *

It isn't easy for an idea to squeeze into a head full of prejudices.

* * *

We must always remember that our Constitution was designed to protect the freedom of the smallest possible minority—one person—against the demands of the greatest possible majority—all other persons combined.

Ben Morell

* * *

To sin by silence when they should protest, makes cowards of men.

Abraham Lincoln

* * *

The main object of teaching is not to explain meanings, but to knock at the door of the mind.

Rabindranath Tagore

* * *

Some people mistake idleness . . . for leisure.

Louis P. Penningroth

* * *

Modern man is suffering from hardening of the oughteries.

Ogden Nash

* * *

Men who are interested only in thirty pieces of silver are temporary disciples.

A backwoods preacher was talking about heaven, describing all its glories. He paused to ask for a show of hands of all who wanted to go there. All but one man responded.

The preacher, shocked, asked the holdout, "Do you mean to tell me you don't want to go to heaven?"

"I want to go all right," came the reply. "But I thought you were trying to get up a load for tonight!"

Bernard Walton

* * *

The minister knocked on the door of a house. "Is that you, angel?" called a woman's voice.

"No," came the answer, "but I'm from the same department."

Frances Benson

* * *

The real tragedy is the tragedy of the man who never in his life braces himself for his one supreme effort, who never stretches to his full capacity, never stands up to his full stature.

Arnold Bennett

* * *

The differences that exist among peoples are so great that we tend to be mildly shocked when we realize that Christian faith claims universality. Christianity is not to be identified wih any country, not even the West. It is for all men everywhere.

Jameson Jones

* * *

Christians ought to act as brothers to other men because Christ died for them and through his redeeming love has led them to seek for all men what they would seek for themselves.

Herman Will, Jr.

(Continued on page 26)

CHARLES L. ALLEN
EDWARD W. STIMSON
GENE E. BARTLETT
NENIEN C. McPHERSON, JR.
JACKSON WILCOX

TRIUMPHING OVER TROUBLE

LEARN TO WAIT FOR THE TIDE

Charles L. Allen, First Methodist Church, Houston, Texas

Recently I spent nearly two weeks at Sea Island, the most beautiful and inspiring place I know of anywhere. The homes, trees, and flowers there are as lovely as man working with God can make them.

But especially am I fascinated by the sea. I would go to sleep at night to the melody of the breakers coming in upon the shore. I would eat breakfast each morning on the porch looking out across the vastness of the water. Each day I would walk several miles down the beach. I would swim out into the deep and then ride the waves back in.

Sometimes I would become almost overwhelmed with how big the ocean is and how little I am. Looking at the ocean, one almost feels a sense of helplessness. We recall that Lord Byron once wrote: "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll! . . . Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain; . . . Man's control stops with the shore." As you look at the ocean you realize, here is something bigger than any man, even bigger than all men.

Then we remember the Bible says, "In His hands are the deep places of the earth . . . The sea is His and He made it" (Psalm 95:4-5). And you come to realize there is One who is bigger than even the ocean; there is a God who is not helpless before it. There is a God who can and does control it. And realizing that, your faith is strengthened and you feel serene and unafraid.

As you live by the ocean for a time, you get a better understanding of life because the two are so much alike. Life itself has vastness that is beyond the reach of our sight. Just as we are told, "In His hands are the deep places of the earth," also we can say with the Psalmist, "I trusted in Thee, O Lord . . . My times are in Thy hand" (31:14-15). We believe nothing can happen in our lives that God cannot handle. That gives us confidence and faith as we think of tomorrow.

There are many parallels between life and the ocean, but one especially impressed me this year — that is the coming and going of the tides. The tides go out and are low, and the tides come in and are high. There is no power of earth that can prevent the low and high tides. So it is with an individual life — we experience times of low tide and of high tide and there is no way to stop those tides.

If we realize that we will experience low tides of our spirit, then our moments of depression and discouragement lose much of their terror. Even the true saints, those whose lives have been most completely in the hands of God, knew times when things seemed dark and when the shining of God's eternal light was very dim. There are times when we do not have a sense of the fullness of God's power or the realization of His presence and when we say even as Christ said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Matt. 27:46). What can we do when the tide of life is low?

I

The Psalmist said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" (42:5), and we ask that same question.

We recall the marvelous Aldersgate experience of John Wesley, at which time he felt his heart "strangely warmed" and knew that his sins had been forgiven. It was a genuine Christian experience. But less than one year

later Wesley wrote in his "Journal," "I know that I am not a Christian. I know it because I do not feel that I love God and His Son Jesus Christ as my Saviour." There it is. There was the time when the power and love of God filled his life, but there also came the moment when the glory was gone.

Many times I have had phone calls from some frantic person saying: "I must see you today. I just cannot go on." But often circumstances would be such that I just could not see that person that day. Several days later when I had time, I would phone and the person would say: "I feel better now. I will be all right." What happened? Their tide had come in.

Down at the lower end of Sea Island is a sandbar. At low tide it shuts off the island from the sea. It would block the progress of a boat. But at high tide the sandbar is covered and out of sight. One could ride a small boat across the bar and out into the deep waters. And there are times when lives are blocked by some circumstances. Try as we might, we cannot go forward. But at other times those difficulties do not hold us back. The difference lies in whether the tide is low or high in your life. If the tide is low, there are times when all we can do is wait for the tide to come in.

Notice these three statements from the Bible — they seem contradictory: "Every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5); "Bear ye one another's burden" (Gal. 6:2); and "Cast thy burden upon the Lord" (Psalm 55:22). But when you study the words which are translated "burden," you see they have different meanings. The "burdens" which we are to bear are our rightful obligations of life. The "burdens" of others which we are to bear are those extra unexpected burdens which are too heavy for one person. But the "burdens" which we are to cast upon the Lord refer to those which are beyond human hands and help.

For example, when a person's house is carried away in a flood, neighbors rally around to help. But when a person's dearest loved one is carried away by death, though the handclasp of a friend helps, it does not heal. There are times when God is our only refuge and help. As the hymn writer put it. "When other helpers fail and comforts flee . . . Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

When those burdens come that we cannot possibly bear, then we "wait for the tide." In his "The Ring and the Rock," Browning uses a wonderful line: "I knew a necessary change in things." Our moments of defeat and sorrow are hard to bear, but we do bear those moments because we are certain of the "necessary change in things." The tide may go out, but just as surely, it comes back.

II

Once some engineers were faced with the problem of lifting some very heavy parts of a bridge which crossed over a bay of the ocean. There were no cranes large enough to lift that load. But they lashed large pontoons under the bridge. Then they waited.

Slowly the tide came in with its tremendous power. Bit by bit the bridge was lifted. The tide represented not only the power of the ocean, but also of the moon and the sun and the other planets of the universe. And there is nothing too heavy for the power of the universe to lift. So it is with the burdens of life. At times we are helpless within our own power, but there is a power greater than man can imagine, the very power of the universe which will work on behalf of man. Learn to "wait for the tide."

The Bible teaches again and again, the principle of "waiting for the tide." For example, a low tide experience is when we become discouraged. All persons are subject to both elevated and depressed moods. And when discouragement does come, and come it will, remember these words: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14). Or

these words: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? . . . hope thou in God" (Psalm 42:11). Wait for the tide which God shall bring in.

Sometimes we get nervously overwrought. We want control, calmness, and peace, but there seems nothing we can do. In such times we need to learn to "wait for the tide." To help in such "low-tide" times, remember these words from the Bible: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7). That verse tells us to be still and rest, but when in a nervous, depressed state that is difficult. The Psalmist knew that so he said, "Rest in the Lord." Picture in your mind the greatness and goodness of God. Say to yourself, "My times are in His hand." And you gain serenity and quietness. Think of the mighty tides of the ocean and learn to "wait for the tide."

Sometimes the burdens of sorrow are so heavy we cannot bear them. But sorrow is a natural part of the experience of living. In the midst of this "low-tide" of life, we need to learn to "wait for the tide." Listen to these words from the Bible: "For His anger endureth but a moment; in his favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). Your agony is not permanent. Though a dark night seems to be setting down upon you, the morning will come. So you carry on through your sorrow knowing it will bring you to the brightness of a new day.

I was in New York the other day and saw one of the giant ships of the sea coming in. It was beautiful and powerful and proud. But majestic as it was, that great ship had to wait for the tide before it could come in. The captain was anxious to make port. There were passengers on board who were in a hurry to land. But no matter, they must wait for the tide.

And there are times when we are anxious to make some port of victory and to accomplish some task, but also, there are times when we must "wait for the tide." But in the waiting, we are certain the tide will rise and because of that certainty we have faith and hope.

THE DEDICATION OF PAIN

Edward W. Stimson, Dundee Presbyterian Church, Omaha, Nebraska

As I make my rounds of the hospitals each week, praying with people on beds of sickness and pain, many tell me of infirmities of the flesh and gnawing pain. Today I would speak of how we may dedicate our pain and find blessing through it, even as under God everything can be made to work for good.

I am reminded of the words the Apostle Paul wrote about his pain. In the Second Corinthian letter, where he has been speaking of his special blessings, particularly of the glory of the revelations he had received, Paul says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the mesenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Much useless speculation has been wasted upon the question of the nature of Paul's infirmity. Some have thought it was epilepsy. More have thought it was that dread eye disease, trachoma, of which Toyohiko Kagawa, the great modern Japanese apostle long suffered. Paul had very bad eyesight, had to use secretaries always, and speaks in one of his letters of signing it with his big scrawl.

Some things Paul says makes us think that his thorn in the flesh was somehow disfiguring, making him very unattractive to look upon. It might have been a back-bending arthritis. Whatever it was, he had to have the attendance of a private physician, Dr. Luke, as he went about on his missionary journeys.

But the important matter is not what the thorn was, but why Paul thought it was sent, and how he reacted to it, glorying in the victory Christ gave him over it and using it to witness to the power of Christ.

I

The words Paul uses to describe his suffering pierce deep into the mystery of the causes of pain. "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me."

Paul here recognized the double moral nature of pain, as it unmasks the mystery of good and evil in the universe. He saw his pain as something evil. He calls it a messenger of Satan. We must never let our religious justifications of pain blind us to its evil character and the need to alleviate it wherever we can. There is a foolish tendency to imagine that because pain can be blessed to us it is a blessed thing, and ought to be liked by a Christian and even sought. This may lead to morbid practices of mortification of the flesh, flagellation, the coveting of pain rather than trying to get rid of it. Such people forget the wholesome shrinking from suffering of our Lord in Gethsemane, and the sensible prayers of Paul when he besought the Lord thrice for relief. Such a point of view might lead to the failure to employ anaesthetics and other drugs which rightly may be used to relieve pain under the advice and prescription of the physician. There is an element of evil in pain, and to seek an anodyne for it is not to thwart the will of God. No religious theory can make a toothache delighftul or a boil desirable. According to the Bible these things are evils, messengers of Satan if you please, though often blessed by God, to be got rid of if possible. Christians may rejoice in tribulation, in God, but that in spite of, not because of tribulation.

And yet, the God who rules over the whole universe permits our pain, permits and even uses the activities of Satan! This is the great mystery. He lets the abuses of freedom that bring suffering to His creatures occur, and in His greater Providence provides the means of turning them to good.

So Paul, though he called his thorn in the flesh a messenger of Satan, also considered that he could find in it a higher purpose: it was sent to humble him, that he should not be exalted above measure, get puffed up with pride and think himself special because God had blessed him with special glorious spiritual experiences.

This we all must learn. We are blessed in so many ways, and there is the danger that we should begin to consider ourselves the special pets of Providence, and forget the humble obedience and concern that we must render for our blessings. The greatest growth and blessing of soul can come only as we are kept humble and teachable.

II

But the great blessing Paul received from his thorn in the flesh was that he learned how under the most adverse circumstances of pain and physical weakness God's grace was sufficient for him. This was the answer he finally received to his thrice-offered anguished prayer. With God's help he could carry on and do more good, as his life witnessed to the victory of spirit Christ gave him over his handicap, than he could have done had he been well and painless. So God's strength was made perfect in his weakness, and he could glory even in his infirmities.

How we need this spirit in our

modern world! Luxury living has made us so soft. Someone has aptly said that the new beatitude for our day is: "Blessed are they that ride in Cadillacs, for they do not get the jolts."

Norman Vincent Peale has given twelve steps to be practiced by those who must learn to live with pain:

1. Believe that pain can teach you something deep about life's values.
2. Think of your pain as a release mechanism to bring greatness of spirit out of you.
3. Realize that some pain may be psychic pain, resulting from unhealthy thinking. Supplant that with healthy thinking.
4. Banish hates, grudges, resentments and guilt. This will conserve energy to meet your problems.
5. Keep the atmosphere around you as peaceful, quiet, and serene as possible.
6. Practice the art of being cheerful.
7. Believe that God has some purpose that can use your pain.
8. Do pleasant and interesting things each day to counteract the unpleasantness of pain.
9. Keep busy in a constructive way.
10. Pray for and help others in pain. This will tend to minimize your own.
11. Practice the presence of God and His healing.
12. Pray and keep on praying. As Brother Lawrence wrote hundreds of years ago, "God is often . . . nearer to us, and more effectually present with us, in sickness than in health . . . Put all your trust in Him."

III

One of the greatest preachers who ever lived, Frederick William Robertson of Brighton, England, suffered terrific pain the last year of his life from a brain tumor, which finally killed him. Four months before he died, while he was still carrying on his terrific ministry, his biographer describes him: "Already the disease which slew him began to declare itself plainly. Loss of the old power and of quickness in thinking, the necessity for a laborious exercise of will in order to stimulate thought, and appalling exhaustions after such an effort were some of the first symptoms. A change in the day appointed for his lecture on Wordsworth was sufficient to throw him into mental confusion. His memory was now so far enfeebled that the whole work of his lecture had to be done over again. Torturing pains in the back of his head and neck, as if an eagle were rending there with its talons, made life dreadful to him. During Monday, Tuesday, and greater part of Wednesday in every week he suffered severely. Alone in his room he lay on the rug, his head resting on the bar of a chair, clenching his teeth to prevent the groans which, even through the sleepless lengths of solitary nights, the ravaging pains could not draw from his manliness." And yet, on Sunday afternoon, May 15, 1853, four months later, he was still in his pulpit, lecturing brilliantly on the very chapter of our text. His biographer says tha tthe manuscript of this Bible lecture is stained with Robertson's own tears. In the lecture Robertson said, "A thorn causes perpetual, unvarying, incessant pain; to forget it is impossible, interfering with all pleasure and enjoyment there is the old rankling throb. It seems perversely to come in contact with every obstacle, just as a child fancies that every person maliciously strikes him on the place where the thorn is."

Yet he closed this, his next to last lecture, with the words: "There is no independence on earth. We are all dependent on the breath of God. Trial soon forces us to feel this. As well might the clouds that surround the setting sun, tinged with gold and vermillion, boast that they shone by their own light; the coming night would soon show them to be but a dim, dark, dense bank of vapor. We hang from hour to hour on God. When we know ourselves aright we

shall feel that we have nothing of our own that is good — that we are strengthless, powerless, and must depend entirely upon His all-sufficient grace."

IV

I knew well a dear woman, who in her eighty-first year was stricken with a cancer, and had to undergo a colostomy. They could not get all the growth, and it soon began to grow in her back, causing incessant pain. She did not understand it, and was complaining that the doctors did no more to help her, so that I had to tell her exactly what her situation was. I told her the growth and pain would continue until her release, and that the more she put off taking opiates, the less she would feel sorry for herself; and the more she was up and doing her home duties, the less she would feel it. She took me at my word. She got up out of bed, and for six more months she cheerfully served the roomers living in her home, going up and down stairs, bearing the pain and trusting God for strength until five days before she died. God's grace was sufficient for her to the last, and I shall never forget the witness of His strength in the victory of my own dear mother over pain and weakness in her triumphant eighy-second year. It was the crowning year of her long useful life, dedicated in faith to her Lord.

God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Can we say with Paul, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"?

THE SERENITY OF SURRENDER

Gene E. Bartlett, Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, New York

There is evidence enough that courage, like the faith of our fathers, is "living still in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword." We are still too close to write the full story, but one day men will look back upon our years as a time when giants of faith were upon the earth.

Consider a man like Bishop Berggrav of Norway. In World War II when the Nazi forces moved into Norway, the Bishop immediately was taken into custody. He might have had his freedom if he had gone along with the new government. But this he refused to do. And by his witness from prison he gave courage to free men everywhere.

Recently Bishop Berggrav revealed something of his feelings at the time of his arrest. He tells us that when the Nazi police arrived to take him, they descended upon his house suddenly. They found him seated in his study with a lawyer friend. As the police took him out of the room, his friend had just time to whisper, "Remember I Peter 3." Berggrav confesses that at the moment he couldn't remember what that chapter contained. But in the car on the way to prison he took his New Testament from his pocket and looked up that chapter. Soon he knew why his friend had whispered this counsel. For in the 14th and 15th verses he read these words: "Even if you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord." Talk about the word of God! What could have said it more fully!

As far as we can foresee, none of us will be called to so dramatic a testing. Yet, can you read words like these without knowing that such word of assurance is for everyone? A disturbed man on his way to prison heard the words that gave him courage. We have our own kinds of testings, our own imprisonments. To keep any degree of serenity in the midst of the uncertainties and threats of life is

probably our deepest achievement of maturity.

Look at life for a moment, not as we might wish it to be but as it really is. There is no strength that cannot ebb away; here is no love which cannot be lost; there is no achievement which cannot be matched by failure; there is no sufficiency in ourselves alone; there is no guarantee of the next moment let alone the next day; there is no assurance, except by faith, that death, which knocks at every door, is not the final master.

In that kind of world is there any serenity to be found, or even any sufficiency? Those words can come to us as to a distressed man on his way to prison, "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord." This is the serenity of surrender. Stated most simply, it means two things.

I

First, in such a surrender of your life, you do give up some things. How often we hold to the very things that keep life upset and disturbed!

Have you moved recently? If so, then you know that one of the most difficult requirements of moving is to leave some things behind. Bring together two people who are in the process of moving, and you may be sure that they soon will comment to each other on how many things one accumulates! The real job is learning what you can do without.

Some of us have resisted moving spiritually for a long time because we don't want to give up anything. Strange what we will keep! So often they are the very things we would be better off without. They make up what the hymn calls, "The needless pain we bear."

Even a moment's reflection will remind us of some things which need to be given up if we are to find the serenity of surrender. Certainly old grudges will have to go. It woud be impossible to say how much of a pastor's experience is dealing with people whose lives are disrupted because they have harbored a hurt which may have taken place even years ago. Yet, there it is, under the surface of some soul—spreading poison and the fever of hatred until the very personality is threatened. Sometimes one feels like saying what Moses said to the children of Israel. They had been marching around a mountain and getting nowhere. At last, the Lord said to Moses, "You have been going about this mountain country long enough; turn northward." There are some hurts, real or fancied, some grudges resting on an experience long past, which must be given up now if you ever expect to find that serenity for which you search.

Some false romantic ideas of the past have to go, too. How easily we paint the past with fairer colors as the years ago by, making the present seem pale beside it. But a living Christian experience is here and now. It isn't the Christ of yesterday as much as the Christ of this moment who calls us to make the great surrender. There is a freedom to be found in the moment when you let the past go, even that romantic, and often recalled past, in order that the contemporary Christ may come in.

And, of course, there are prejudices that must be surrendered. Whenever we speak of prejudice we almost always think of racial attitudes. Actually, this is not so, of course. It was a Negro lady who explained this once in an interesting insight. She said that on one of her travels she went to the dining car and found herself in conversation with a most interesting table companion. After they had become acquainted, they came to the natural question about their respective vocations. Her charming companion said, "Oh, I am a circus performer." "Immediately," said this Christian Negro woman, "I found myself making my companion fit into my own prejudiced idea of what a circus performer really was. In that moment it came to me that I had a prejudice of my own. It was difficult to let this

woman who until a few moments ago had been a charming and gracious table companion remain a person not warped by my prejudice of what she must be." So, there are many kinds of prejudice, which simply means a pre-judging until a person isn't accepted as a person. To let that go, to give it up after the years is to take an important step in coming at last to the serenity of surrender.

Let's put it into a simple picture. The Christian life may be depicted in the scene of a mountain climber who must make a difficult descent. He will need to tie himself to someone else to do it. If he is wise he will at least say to his guide: "You hold on to your end of the rope, and I'll hold on to mine. I will trust you to hold your end secure while I make this descent." No man can hold both ends of the rope in his own hand and find any strength in it. He has to surrender one end of it to someone else he trusts.

So with your life. This anxious, harried, and sometimes frantic generation too often has tried to hold both ends of the rope in its own hand. To find serenity, you first will give up something. "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled."

II

But even deeper, you will give in to Someone. "In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord."

At first this well may seem a departure from our search for serenity. But in a very deep way it comes immediately to the heart of it. What is the secret of serenity? Stated most simply, it is finding a new center to your life — a center other than yourself. That center you find in your reverence for Jesus Christ. Paul caught it in words that are exact and meaningful. "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." "Not I" -- that's giving up something. "But Christ liveth in me" — that's giving in to Someone.

For Martin Luther it came in the darkest hour of the Reformation. In his diary he records that one night he looked out of his window and saw a sign in the heavens. Reading this we would suppose that it must have been something unusual and miraculous. But when we read on it was neither. He said that he simply saw the whole firmanent of heaven held by the unseen hand of God without a pillar visible on which it could be resting. And he said to himself that if God can hold the firmament without the eye of man being able to see that on which it rests, then the strength of God is sufficient to assist a man in the hour of his struggle, and he turned back from the window with a new peace in his heart.

But our concern is not for some great Christian of the past, even the greatest. It is for those of us who in the busyness of our common life have set aside this hour to remember God. At last you will have to try it; try that reverence for Christ as the new center of your life. You see, that is the positive answer to all of the negative, frightening, and crushing experiences that come to us all. Somehow God has willed not to remove the outside burden, but to give us the strength of Christ inside until at last we are made sufficient.

FACING LIFE UNAFRAID

Nenien C. McPherson, Jr., Grace Methodist Church, Dayton, Ohio

Scripture: Matthews 10:28-31.

Fear — one of the most constructive and conservative forces in life — is, at the same time, one of the most paralyzing and disruptive emotions which can beset an individual.

Fear has been described as the ele-

mental alarm system of the human organism. There is a sudden peril or danger. This calls forth a ready fear which ordinarily leads to some form of immediate action. This provides a possible quick escape or solution to the danger that confronts one. Such an elemental alarm system is primary and indispensable to the human organism. It is very doubtful if man could have survived without this alarm system of fear and the quick responses it invokes.

Fear made primitive man swift to scent danger and swift to flee. This racial experience is embodied in an old adage that suggests that he who runs away may live to fight another day. Fear of cold and freezing played its part in the development of forms of shelter from the elements and the ability to start a fire to keep oneself warm. The fear of famine and drought has been an incentive and continues to be a driving force in the development of the agricultural arts and the sciences that contribute to them. In a world faced with a "population explosion," fear of starvation for the race demands that the rate of production of food be increased materially. The fear of poverty and want causes individuals to practice the principles of thrift and saving for the rainy day that may come. Medicine certainly has made tremendous progress because of man's fear of pain, disease, and death; this fear continues to stimulate scientists' efforts to discover ways to control and alleviate suffering and to prolong and enrich human life. Religion also finds one of its roots in man's fear of the mysterious, the unknown, the unpredictable, and the tragic. Thus, fear has played and continues to play an important role in human affairs.

Granting the useful function of fear in human living, however, one must see that this is only half the story. There is the obsessive and paralyzing side of fear. Such fear is capable of disorganizing and defeating mind and body and leading to failure in the business of life. Such fear is the greatest threat to human living. Dr. Abraham Myerson, Professor of Neurology in Tufts Medical School, declares that "when this type of fear becomes chronic, it destroys endurance as well as happiness, and marks the beginning of disaster."

Paralyzing fear takes the heart out of life. It distorts and twists our perspective so that nothing is seen as it really is. It multiplies our dangers and difficulties and peoples our world with all sorts of hideous objects and dangers that exist nowhere except in our tortured imaginations. Dumas has his chief character in "The Count of Monte Cristo" say: "Before we are alarmed we see correctly; when we are alarmed we see double; and when we have been alarmed we see nothing but trouble."

I

Many of the fears which grip us grow out of an over-concern with ourselves: our health, our social standing, our reputation — what people think about us or say about us — and our comfort. Learning to live with oneself and to have a proper estimate of one's importance and dignity — and not to think too highly of oneself — involves important skills we should all develop.

Most of us most of the time take ourselves too seriously. A friend in another city tells about certain rules her father had developed to guide his children. There were about five that were needed so often that he had numbered them. When it was necessary to invoke them, he would merely mention the rule by number and they knew what he had in mind. If at the table she should reveal in conversation too much concern with what she was to wear at the next dance or seemed too anxious about what another teenager would think about something she did or was to do, he would say: "Elizabeth, remember Rule Three." Rule Three was: "Don't take yourself too seriously." It is very easy for us to fall into the

practice of making the world revolve around us, so that what we do or say or what happens to us becomes magnified out of proportion to its real significance.

It has been suggested that the fear of disease and the knowledge of germs that has been discovered because of research stimulated by that fear have served a useful function in human life. It is true, however, that many suffer from diseases that exist nowhere but in their over-worked imaginations. Years ago many families kept a "Greer's Almanac" handy so as to know when to plant the garden, the right time of the moon for putting in the crops, and what to expect of the weather in the season ahead. The "Almanac" was an interesting publication. It would have useful information on one page and on the opposite page there would be an advertisement for some cure-all medicine. In order to promote the sale of the medicine, individuals had to be led to recognize certain symptoms of diseases that the medicine could cure or relieve. A diligent reading of the "Almanac" often led to queer feelings and aches in various parts of the body that caused one to believe he was suffering from the diseases described. The older almanacs have disappeared but the modern substitute is the "Reader's Digest," a very wonderful monthly magazine that saves us all a lot of time in keeping up with current articles. The articles almost every month, however, include some that describe medical research or what is being done to find relief for some particular disease and the reading of them often has the same result as that once produced by reading the "Almanac." In short, there are individuals who seem literally to "enjoy bad health" that comes partly out of an over-developed imagination. For example, digestion takes place best and most effectively when fear of indigestion is absent. There was a friend who always asked the hostess for a glass of bicarbonate of soda about an hour after enjoying a "company" meal; he was always afraid of indigestion after eating such good food.

Fear sometimes leads to the opposite reaction. Some individuals do not pay enough attention to their health because they are afraid of what they may discover and the changes in their way of living such a discovery might bring. A friend who was a housemother in one of our colleges had lost her husband some ten years before. She had had a physical examination at that time and was in good health. During the years that followed she had "eaten herself out of shape." She had not been to see a doctor for these ten years; she was afraid to go; she feared she had high blood pressure and the doctor would order her to stop working or take more rest than her position would allow. After much urging she consented to see a physician, and his examination revealed that while she was overweight her blood pressure was only slightly above normal. The diet he prescribed — mostly grapefruit and steaks (not too hard to take) — caused her to lose about twenty pounds which greatly improved her appearance, made her look younger, and removed her fear of what the doctor might discover.

The task before each of us is how to get ourselves off our hands, how to forget ourselves in such fashion that life will take on more significance. We need to forget ourselves by being absorbed in a worthwhile task or in rendering service to others. The great danger we face continuously is that we shall fall into the pit of self-pity. When we do, we usually are found asking over and over again, "Why did this have to happen to me?" as though the universe somehow should have dealt us an easier lot in life, should have made an exception in our case.

Dr. Holman, who taught for a number of years in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and who now serves a Baptist church

in Honduras, tells about a friend who was a missionary in China. This missionary decided he could aid in the financial support of his missionary endeavor if he had a small hand printing press and so might communicate with friends back in America about his work. The press and a font of type were sent to him. The first time issue had to be stopped in the process because the article the missionary had written called for more capital "I's" than the font normally had. It is worth remembering in this connection that more than half of the people who were in mental hospitals in Great Britain before World War II began were released during the war to go back home. There was work to do, and they didn't have time to think about themselves; others were depending upon their labors. This has led one psychiatrist to declare: "Those men and women with perpetual jitters usually are suffering from nothing more than idle minds that have gone to work on themselves."

II

Facing life unafraid means to face life squarely — the ugly with the beautiful, the discouraging with the hopeful, the bitter with the pleasant. It means we should never run away for if we do we carry our fears and anxieties with us and we have no escape. We need to summon courage enough to look at things as they really are.

Some of our fears will disappear merely by being faced frankly. We will see that there is no real danger and that we have nothing about which to be afraid.

Many causes of our fears can be removed, and we should do this whenever possible. Many dangers can be avoided. Many fears can be eliminated by a careful analysis of our situation and the things we fear. Here is a young man who is afraid he has a loathsome disease. The fear is grounded in guilt feelings because of things done years before. He has convinced himself that, although he has no symptoms of the disease he fears, he is a victim of this disease. He can clear this matter up and destroy this fear completely by going to a competent physician.

Some of the terrifying circumstances can be neither removed nor avoided. In these cases we must rise victoriously over our fears by right inner attitudes and spiritual resources. We cannot avoid the thing of which we are afraid, but we can be delivered from the fear of it.

There are two ways and only two, for example, of facing one of the inevitables of life, namely, death. We can face it fearfully and resentfully. In this case, a man contributes nothing to his own recovery and much pain and anxiety to his family and friends. Or we can face it courageously and victoriously. Often we live longer because of our healthy minds, and certainly we make it easier for those we love and those who love us.

Doctor Tittle tells about one of his friends whose doctor had told him that there was no chance of his recovery; in fact, he was honest with his patient and let him know that his days were definitely numbered. The patient finished certain tasks so as to make the administration of his estate easier for his wife and tried to live each day that was left for him so as to make it significant. The friend said to Dr. Tittle: "I have done what I set out to do in arranging my affairs and there is nothing on my mind to cause me anxiety." He became an inspiration for all who knew him and was able to live fully the days that were left for him and not merely to exist as he would have done had he been fearful and resentful.

There are really only two ways of facing any adversity. We can drown our sensibilities and fears in drink, and many people undertake this "remedy." Or we can turn to narcotics for the same reason and with the same temporary results. Or we can

jump off a ten story building and end it all in suicide, and this is very final and complete. On the other hand, we can develop the attitude and faith of a Sir Walter Scott. His publishing house into which he had put all of his earnings and savings had failed as a business venture. His favorite grandson had just died, and his wife was lying ill with an incurable disease. Yet Sir Walter Scott could write in his diary, using the words of Shakespeare's King Henry IV:

> Are these things then necessities?
> Then let us face them like
> necessities?

Courage is not the absence of fear but the conquest of fear. As John MacMurray writes, in "Fredom in the Modern World," "Look the facts you are afraid of in the face; see them in all their brutality and ugliness and you will find, not that they are unreal, but they are not to be feared." This courage can come only from sincere, personal religious faith. This is the faith that makes it possible to face life unafraid. Faith in the essential trustworthiness of God and the ultimate triumph of justice and brotherhood through the power of love and goodwill. This will not remove our difficulties, but it will give us the courage to be victorious over them and to be relieved of our fears.

We can face life suspiciously, fearfully, and bitterly, or we can face life unafraid as one who is always eager to believe the best — not hiding our heads in the sand nor denying that which we know to be real—but cultivating the habit of being eager to believe the best about ourselves and our neighbors, confident that nothing outside of us can ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. We need to build our lives on the faith and conviction that absolutely nothing, except our own turning away from him, can ever separate us from the love of God who loves us not for what we are but because of what he is, that neither things present nor things to come, neither death nor life, can separate us from his love and concern.

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That though I perish, truth is so;
> That, wheresoe'er I stray and
> range,
> Whate'er I do, Thou dost not
> change,
> I steadier step when I recall
> That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

WHEN LIFE GROWS ROUGH

Jackson Wilcox, First Baptist Church, Santa Cruz, California

I have just made a 2400 mile drive across the country. I drove a new, small compact car. It was good to see the way the car handled on the wide open road, well paved and maintained, and with miles and miles of visible highway stretched out ahead. There were several times in Wyoming and Nevada when I felt as if I were sailing along on top of the world. Everything was right.

But the strongest tests of the little car did not come at such times. They came at times when there were signs which said "Bump" or "Detour—Road under Construction" or "Slippery when Wet or Frosty" or "Steep Hill." Then there was the time in Iowa when I turned south at Independence to go from U.S. 20 to U.S. 30 on a secondary road. It was here that I came to the sign which said, "Road to Vinton Closed." A bridge had been washed out. Then I started trying back roads, badly broken up and full of axle-deep ruts. A couple of farmers, from whom I obtained directions, looked as though they thought I was off my rocker to be going where I said I was trying to go on such winter-scarred dirt roads in such a car. But looking at a map early that morn-

ing, I had decided to have breakfast in Vinton. The fact that I did is a tribute to the little Rambler.

Life is like that. It is a great joy to be sailing along in a sunshine glow of fair weather. It is right for us to keep living in this manner as much as we are able. And I believe that all of us could live in positive joy much more if we would just accept God's promises and remember every day to "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." The promise of Christ is that when doing this, "All these things shall be added unto you."

Even so, the very nature of this world — Satan's power, the mortal claims of life and death — insist that life grow rough in places. Every day canno tbe a mountain plateau. There must be the valleys. And the big tests of life always come along those rough stretches. What do we do? How do we handle ourselves?

A California criminal who spent a long time on death row in San Quentin was defended by a great many well-intentioned people on the basis that this man was a gifted writer and would be a good risk in society again. But psychologists who studied the case said otherwise. They said that it is probable that everything would be just fine as long as this self-assured man was having his way and things were going fine. But let trouble come! Let reversals block the way. Then this man's emotional instability would find him turning again toward crime and an arrogant disdain of law.

The largest tests come when life is roughest.

A vivid demonstration of this is to be found in the life of Elijah, one of the great spiritual men of all ages. In I Kings 19, Elijah is seen in the fiercest of testing crucibles. His reactions and responses to the word of God stand as guides for all of us in such circumstances.

Elijah had won a victory. He had defeated the prophets of Baal at Carmel. But his arch enemy, powerful Queen Jezebel, was consumed by a rising red rage to kill Elijah. When King Ahab told Jezebel about the destruction of Baal's prophets at Carmel, the evil queen made a vow that within twenty-four hours she, herself, would slay Elijah.

When Elijah saw this, he arose and began to run for his life toward the south. He did not stop until he arrived at Beersheba in Judah where he left his servant. Then he went on a day's journey into the wilderness and sat down in utter despair beneath a juniper tree. This man who was one of the most dynamic leaders Israel ever had, who shaped the history of his day, who dominated Hebrew thinking for centuries, who had a name which itself declared "Jehovah is my God" — this man was in a bleak, lonely spiritual valley of desolation. The road ahead was broken. The storm behind was raging. He wished to be dead. He cried, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life!" His sedation was that of empty weariness. Finally he fell asleep.

Then in that sleep God began to speak to Elijah through an angel. The way of recovery was revealed to him step by step. He was to eat and rest. Then he was to go on a forty day journey back to Horeb, the "mount of God" where the commandments had been given to Moses. He was going back to the source of Jewish strength and law. When he did this, he heard God's voice in the stillness. Then he returned to his prophetic task with new power and insight.

Elijah's experience is a good outline of what we must do when life grows rough.

1. We must gather all of the strength and physical durability which we are able. The physical condition of our bodies contributes to our ability to stand the storms of life. Day after day proper diet, sufficient rest, regular exercise, and clean living will contribute to your spiritual ability to face life. An article in To-

day's Health suggests that one in ten American homes have inadequately nutritious diets. This is not God's plan. The angel touched Elijah and said, "Arise and eat."

2. We must go back to the spiritual source of our faith. For Elijah this meant a rugged forty day trip to Mt. Horeb. There he relived some of the cosmic experiences in the place where four centuries before God had given the law to Moses. For us, this drive back to original sources ought to take us to the Bible. God's word has an ageless message for life's troubled times. This is the book which is able to be shelter, shield, and hope through any night of sorrow: "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word" (Psalm 119:114).

3. Having gone back to the source, we must be alert for God's special revelation of himself to us. This is what theologians call a theophany, the manifestation of God to an individual. As Elijah stood on Mt. Horeb it came to him in the simplest of ways. First, there was physical violence and earth shaking events — wind, flying rocks, earthquake, fire. But God was in none of these. Finally, the "still small voice." This was God. I believe that God still speaks in the still small voice. And when our lives have been ripped and torn asunder by harsh, perplexing experiences, we need to turn back to the source of our faith and be ready for the still small voice of direct revelation.

4. We must be ready to obey God. The message to Elijah began with, "Go, return on thy way." More often than not, after we have had a hard experience, God will tell us to go back where we were and to take up our burdens and responsibilities right where we left them. In this we are certain to have the guidance of God. Dr. Daniel Jenkins, a British pastor and professor of theology, said: "God is a hidden God. After he has revealed himself he keeps the initiative." Once we have been driven back to God through rough experience and heard that unmistakable voice, he is eager to direct our lives and to guide us in all things from then on. And he will if we but maintain our sensitivity to the heavenly voice.

WORTH QUOTING from page 12

The highest result of education is tolerance. Long ago men fought and died for their faith; but it took ages to teach them the other kind of courage—the courage to recognize the faiths of their brethren and their rights of conscience.

Helen Keller

* * *

One of the most difficult instruments to play well is second fiddle.

* * *

Character is revealed in the actions of the unguarded moment.

* * *

The uncharitable tell people where to get off; the charitable help them to get back on.

* * *

Be of good courage; the thing that mars your joy today may become a trifle tomorrow.

* * *

Ahead of me one day lay a drive of more than 500 miles . . . Before I set forth, a preacher friend prayed for me, using a phrase which has remained with me ever since.

"O God," he pleaded, "be with my friend this day and guide him in all the little decisions he will have to make along the highway."

He made no plea for safety, for protection against great hazards, or for an eventual arrival. Instead, he invoked the interest and concern of God as I made the small decisions.

Few of us are required to make a great decision every day, but all of us have to make many little ones . . .

Some of us may be known for the one or two great decisions we make, but most of us will be judged by the sum total of the small decisions at which we arrive.

It is reasonable for Christians to expect the assistance of the Holy Spirit in making correct judgments about matters great or small.

Little matters are seldom spectacular, but they are important and determinate. Let any man shave the truth just a little and do it a dozen times. Almost before he knows it, he is an outright liar.

The Christian who pollutes his mind with small evils finds it impossible to reach clear judgments concerning great evils . . . .

He who is determined to do the will of God can be sure of God's help in the little decisions.

Roy L. Smith

* * *

Men must learn to have a faith that will create the right revolution.

Frank N. D. Buchman

* * *

We can slip our Communist ideology in through the weak spots in men's characters.

Chou En-lai

* * *

Religion is essential to the implementation of the moral principles, if not to their very existence. This is the essence of religion in education. The long-range purpose of the Christian college, her most important responsibility, is to supply a spiritual force which will lend purpose to the monumental task of finding answers to mankind's problems. Supported by this force, the emotionally and intellectually mature man, blessed with the gift of leadership, will have the ability to relate the new discoveries to continuing human progress.

Andrew R. Cecil

* * *

The sturdiest tree is not found in the shelter of a forest, but high upon some rocky crag where its daily battle with the elements shapes it into a thing of beauty. So it is with us.

Megiddo Message

* * *

The world is full of people whose notion of a satisfactory future is, in fact, a return to an idealized past.

Robertson Davies

* * *

Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when, whatever be the posture of the body, the soul is on its knees.

Victor Hugo

* * *

The man who says his evening prayer is a captain posting his sentinels. He can sleep.

Charles Baudelaire

* * *

Too much of the Christian faith has become trimming on the dress of life instead of part of the fabric.

Ralph Taylor Alton

* * *

Except a living man, there is nothing more wonderful than a book! A message to us from human souls we never saw. And yet these arouse us, terrify us, teach us, comfort us, open their hearts to us as brothers.

Charles Kingsley

* * *

The little things you laugh about now are the chisels with which you will sculpture your happiest memories.

Louis Paul Lehman

* * *

There is no problem of human nature which is insoluble.

Ralph J. Bunche

* * *

Everything in life is colored by your personality, but as you mature you become more aware of outside things, less concerned about yourself.

John Steinbeck

* * *

The unforgiven sin is not to do the best you can with what you have.

D. R. Theophilus

* * *

Who's got big plans and enthusiasms? The chairman has 'em.

Who'll do the work he plots with zeal?
We'll!
Oh, we'll gallop and labor here and there,
While the jolly chairman warms his chair,
And who'll get credit for this affair?
He'll!

Georgie Starbuck Galbraith

* * *

After the close of the second World War, I visited St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. The church had suffered greatly in the war; the roof was burned off and the charred beams in the ceiling cast weird shadows over the burned pews. Everything seemed ruined except Thorwaldsen's statue of Christ at the front over the high altar, which seemed to be unharmed.

Upon examining the statue further, I found that the hands were missing. As I stood by musing, saying more to myself than to anyone else, "Where are His hands?" a voice seemed to say: "Christ's hands are needed to minister to His suffering and needy brethren. You must be His hands! We must all be His hands!

Richard C. Raines

* * *

Having your own way in the world is not always the right way.

William E. Strance